

REFEREE'S CALL:

A Band Of Brothers

by Nelson "DOC" Hamilton

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What do you call a group of young men who get together weekly for the expressed purpose of making each other cry "uncle", and to physically beat each other to the point of exhaustion and semi-consciousness?

What do you call a group of young men who, on any given weekend, go looking for fights throughout California and any neighboring state? And, after the fights, win or lose, go out together and celebrate.

What do you call a group of young men who form a company for the expressed purpose of managing not only their contracts but also those of any other fighter?

What do you call a group of young men who, possessing an abundance of talent, expertise, and confidence, put their money where their mouth is and invest in the equipment required to shoot, perform in, edit, and produce technique videos for the general public?

You can call them anything you like, but they call themselves North County Fight Club (NCFC). They are a group of friends from North County San Diego, California, who have been training and competing successfully in MMA for the past six years.

While they share the same brothers in arms camaraderie and passion for competing as some other well-known MMA teams, what sets them apart is their business-like approach to the sport. For instance, they presently manage fourteen fighters, including such well-known competitors as Jason Lambert, Dan Henderson, Charlie Kohler, and Jeremy Jackson.

In addition to fighter management, they've now ventured into promoting private corporate MMA events. Having the ability to provide both matchmaking and security, and working in conjunction with corporations desirous of gaining exposure through sponsorship, it seems that they have the blueprint for success.

I know what you're thinking; so they know business, but can they fight? Well, let's start with NCFC co-founder/president and owner of the NCFC training site, Jeff Clark. He has trained martial arts for 18 years and is a fifth degree black belt in traditional karate. After nine years of training, he earned his first-degree black belt in BJJ under well-known and respected instructor, Roy Harris. He is a world-class striker and presently undefeated in MMA with a 5-0-0 record.

Matt Stansell is co-founder and vice-president of NCFC. After receiving his black belt in BJJ from Roy Harris, he made the leap from the straight life of a restaurant manager, and defensive tactics instructor for the sheriff's department, to a life of uncertainty as a BJJ instructor and fighter management. Presently, he is the KOTC Welterweight World Champion.

The most experienced member of NCFC is Jason Lambert. Originally fighting as an undersized heavyweight, he has come into his own as a UFC light-heavyweight. Having defeated the likes of, Brandon Lee Hinkle, Rob McDonald, Travis Wiuff, and Marvin Eastman, to name a few, he presently sports an impressive record of 22-5-0.

NCFC's up and coming heavy weight is Manny Rodriguez. After undergoing successful surgery for testicular cancer a year ago, Manny returned to competition with a philosophy of being reborn and nothing to fear in the Octagon. He is a rugged and fearless competitor who has knocked out his last two opponents in the first round. He is presently rated King of the Cage #3 heavyweight and has his sights set on capturing the championship in the very near future.

Last but not least, Brian "El Gato" Whitaker is a core member of NCFC considered to be a video and computer genius. However, in addition to being a techie, he is also a brown belt in BJJ under Roy Harris. Although known for his technical ground game, he has also trained for five years in both boxing and kickboxing and is an integral member of the NCFC training staff.

In addition to these core members, there are approximately 22 other active team members. Some of them do not have the most stable family relationships and but for the guidance received through their participation in

NCFC, they could very easily become another societal drop out. It is a constant source of amazement that such an outwardly violent looking sport can be such a vehicle for shaping strong character and instilling a sense of self-worth.

I don't know if any of the NCFC membership has ever read Shakespeare's "Henry the V", but I'm sure that they would revel in his words; "We few, we happy few, we band of brothers, for he today that sheds his blood with me shall be my brother."

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